

News From Terre Haute, Indiana

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Ameren project decision expected in August

Lisa Trigg

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TERRE HAUTE — A decision on the construction of Ameren's Illinois Rivers Transmission project, which would end in Vigo County, is expected to be made by mid-August.

Ameren Transmission Co. of Illinois proposes to construct a 380-mile, 340,000-volt transmission line that would interconnect Missouri, Illinois and Indiana. It's a project that has already drawn opposition in Illinois from Edgar County officials and businesses in Clark County.

Beth Bosch, spokeswoman for the Illinois Commerce Commission, said the case "is in the rebuttal phase right now."

Agencies or groups — such as JDL Broadcasting or Stop the Power Lines Coalition — earlier this year each filed to become a legal "intervenor" to make suggestions on potential routes and the project. Ameren can then file rebuttals to those comments/suggestions. The rebuttal phase ends April 26.

"Hearings are scheduled to begin May 13, where impacted people or groups cross examine witnesses who have testimony on file," Bosch said. The hearings are held before administrative law judges.

Those judges will then issue a proposed order on the project.

"Briefs are due in June, so I would not expect a proposed order in the case until mid-June or later," she said Monday. The Illinois Commerce Commission will not start its review until after that proposed order, Bosch said.

JD Spangler — owner of JDL Broadcasting, which operates WMMC-FM 105.9 — said his business filed as an intervenor because of a potential effect a power transmission line could have on the signal of the radio station's broadcast airwaves, as well as safety, "because it is within 200 feet of a 500-foot tower. But, our guy wires go out farther, so the proposed deal would be within the guy wire range," he said.

"Obviously no one would put that [power transmission line] there on purpose without thinking there must be a better way," Spangler said. "We had to hire an attorney, which is very expensive, and we had to hire broadcast engineers to do studies, and people who put up our tower had to do a report," he added.

Chris Patrick, chairman of the Edgar County Board, said the county first opposed the transmission lines in August 2012, saying the transmission project would negatively affect residences, businesses, development and wildlife in the county.

Patrick heads a new board, which includes four new members among the seven on the board. “The board has not changed its position,” Patrick said Monday. “It would not change until we know more. The only thing that would change our minds is if we knew exactly where it will go,” he said, which would not be more clearly known until a proposed order is determined. **ATXI Exhibit 1**

Leigh Morris, spokesman for Ameren, said the company has listed its preferred and secondary routes with the ICC, plus possible alternative route sections. “We have not changed our proposal. We have some route segments. The reason we did that was in the event that the commission wanted to use portions of the primary and the alternat[iv]e routes, from one side of the state to the other,” Morris said.

The ICC could pick either route, make modifications or design a new route, such as select an intervenor route, Morris said, or could deny a certification to proceed, which would require Ameren to start its process all over.

In a March 29 report, Greg Rockrohr of ICC’s Energy Engineering Program Safety & Reliability Division, recommended the use of Ameren’s alternative route from a Kansas substation to the Indiana state border or a route submitted by Clark County’s Stop the Power Lines Coalition.

Rockrohr stated that either Ameren’s “alternate route or SPLC’s second alternative route would be the best. [Ameren’s] alternative route is slightly shorter, but would likely require more dead-end structures than SPLC’s second alternative,” Rockrohr’s report states.

SPLC’s second route suggestion runs straight east from the Kansas substation, paralleling an existing 138-kilovolt line, but turns to the northeast in Symmes Township. The route would then turn to the south and east, in steps, until joining with Ameren’s alternative route, the report states.

The transmission line would end in Vigo County. Angeline Protogere, spokeswoman for Duke Energy, said the company would construct and own about one mile of line to connect to the company’s Dresser Station, commonly referred to as the Sugar Creek station.

Reporter Howard Greninger can be reached at 812-231-4204 or howard.greninger@tribstar.com.